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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

For Immediate Release

May 23, 1996

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
BY SATELLITE
TO THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON
EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CONFERENCE
IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN

9:35 A.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Tony, for your remarks, your support, your friendship and your leadership of the committee. I want to say hello to the others who are there -- to John Sweeney and to Al Checchi. I want to say a special word of thanks to my good friend, Justin Dart who I know had to leave, but who has been a real champion for Americans with disabilities; indeed, for the rights and interests of all Americans.

I want to say a special word of greeting to the cochairs of the committee, the vice chairs -- Norm Miller, I. King Jordan, Karen Meyer, Neil Jacobson, Dr. Sylvia Walker, and Ron Drach.

Thank you, all of you who are there for your very warm welcome. I'm sorry I couldn't join you in person today, I have to be in Milwaukee with the German Chancellor. But I didn't want to miss this opportunity to talk with you about what we must do together to ensure the full participation of the 49 million Americans with disabilities in the vibrant life and economy of our great country.

Three and a half years ago, when I took the oath of office, I had a very clear vision of what I hoped our country could be like as we move into the 21st century. I wanted us to be a country that offers great opportunities to all who are willing to work for them. I wanted us to remain the world's strongest force for peace and freedom. And I wanted us to rebuild our sense of unity and community around the shared ethic of responsibility and a respect for diversity.

Together we've made great progress toward achieving those goals. Our economic strategy to reduce the deficit, expand trade and invest in our people is paying off. The deficit

is now less than half of what it was four years ago; we have 8.5 million more jobs, the lowest combined rates of inflation, mortgage rates and employment in 27 years. Homeownership is at a 15-year high, and we have all-time highs in exports and new business formations for each of the last three years.

We've also worked hard to increase educational opportunities for all Americans -- from more positions for children in Head Start to more affordable college loans to a national service program. We've done our part to fight to lower the crime rate by passing a Crime Bill which is putting 100,000 police officers on the street, banning assault weapons, and passing the Brady Bill which has kept 60,000 people with criminal records or other disturbing histories from getting handguns. (Applause.) And we have maintained our commitment to a clean, safe environment for all Americans.

Compared to four years ago, the world is also a safer and more peaceful place. The nuclear threat is diminished. No weapons are pointed at the people of the United States. Peace and freedom are taking hold from Haiti to South Africa, to Northern Ireland, to Bosnia, to the Middle East. We have moved a long way in three and a half years.

But today I want to talk to you about our country's future, especially in terms of that first objective -- expanding opportunities for every American who is willing to take responsibility for making the most of his or her God-given abilities. The theme of your conference is investing in abilities. That's been something we've tried very hard to do and something I intend to keep on doing.

In 1992 I issued a challenge to our nation. I said we must not rest until America has a national disability policy based on three simple creeds: inclusion, not exclusion; independence, not dependence; and empowerment, not paternalism. (Applause.) I remain committed to that vision, and I want to thank all of you for working so hard with us to make it a reality. More than ever before in our history, America's greatness in the next century will depend upon the ability of all our citizens to make the most of their own lives. Americans with disabilities are an enormous, largely untapped reservoir of that potential.

Employment is the key to economic security for Americans, including people with disabilities. Even though we have created 8.5 million new jobs, it remains a tragedy today that two-thirds of the people with disabilities are unemployed. And it's up to all of us -- employers, labor, people with disabilities, and government -- to work together to change this picture.

In the past four years, we have made progress. We're fighting to make sure that people with disabilities have health care and the living wages they need to live independently. Our strong commitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act has opened up town halls, schools, transportation systems, workplaces, groceries, restaurants, and movie theaters to millions of people with disabilities. Our 1997 budget calls for an increase in funding for ADA enforcement at the Department of Justice. (Applause.)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is preparing students with disabilities to get their share of the high-wage jobs that are opening up in this new economy. I know how

much the IDEA means to millions of students with disabilities and to their parents. I strongly support it. (Applause.)

High school graduates with disabilities who went to school under IDEA have an employment rate twice that of the overall population of individuals with disabilities. We're building on this achievement by supporting efforts like your high school high-tech program that is guiding promising students to college and careers in science and technology. We're making sure people with disabilities are included in our school-to-work efforts.

No one -- no one -- should have to go through what Judy Heumann went through to get an education in our country. She's been a pioneer in the struggle for the rights of people with disabilities. She developed polio when she was 18 months old and she was denied the right to attend public school until the fourth grade. She had to sue to get a teaching job that was denied her because she uses a wheelchair. And during the '70s, she participated in a sit-in that resulted in the creation of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. As my Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education, she now runs IDEA. That is her remarkable story and we need more of them. (Applause.)

But you and I know the ADA and the IDEA alone will not achieve our vision of inclusion, independence and empowerment for people with disabilities. That's why I fought so hard for measures like the Family and Medical Leave Act. And today I'm announcing that as a result of your work, federal agencies are now developing a better system for tracking the unemployment rate of people with disabilities.

This new system will strengthen our ability to include people with disabilities in all our employment policies and program. In addition, I've asked the Secretary of Commerce to work with your committee and relevant federal agencies to recommend to me ways that we can ensure that people with disabilities are included in all our efforts to assist entrepreneurs and small businesses. So we are making progress. (Applause.)

But let me say there is more to do. First we must preserve the guarantee of Medicaid coverage for people with disabilities. For three decades Americans have stood on common ground about the need for guaranteed Medicaid coverage for older Americans, pregnant women, low-income children and people with disabilities. But last year Congress sent me legislation to repeal that guarantee -- legislation that would have taken away health care coverage from millions of Americans who need it most. I vetoed that legislation, and if they send it to me again and they want to repeal the guarantee again I will veto it again. (Applause.)

Let me be clear. We can balance this budget without repealing guaranteed Medicaid coverage for the six million Americans with disabilities who depend upon it, including one million children. Medicaid is a family issue, as people with disabilities know, making it possible for more people to get care at home and in their communities. Without the guarantee, a middle-class family with a child with a severe disability could be forced into poverty to pay for the child's medical care. Parents could be forced to give up jobs to stay home to care for a child. Children and adults who live independently today might be forced into institutions. I will not let that happen. (Applause.)

The second thing we have to do is to strengthen the health security of people with disabilities and, indeed, for all Americans, with the passage of the Kassebaum-Kennedy health insurance reform bill. This legislation would not allow insurance companies to deny coverage for anybody with a preexisting condition, and will allow people to keep their health insurance if they change jobs or if someone in the family gets sick. So I urge Congress to stop stalling and pass the bill now, as an important step forward. (Applause.)

Finally, let me say I've called on Congress to increase the minimum wage, which will benefit millions of Americans with disabilities who face extra costs for accessible housing and personal assistance. We need that. (Applause.)

All of you know that America is in the best position to be a winner in the global economy of the 21st century because of the depths of our values, the strengths of our diversity, the power of our economy. But we don't have a person to waste. We have to continue to expand opportunity, demand responsibility from all of our citizens. And that does mean inclusion, not exclusion. (Applause.)

Again, let me thank you, all of you, for everything you've done and for everything you will do. Thank you for the progress we've made and the progress we still will make.

Just last week I had a very moving visit with Christopher Reeve in the Oval Office, and I mentioned to Christopher that in 1933 the Oval Office was the first government office designed specifically to be accessible to accommodate President Roosevelt. He said to me that it was too bad that at the time he had to hide his disability.

I hope with Christopher Reeve that as the Roosevelt Memorial becomes a reality, with your efforts to remove the stigma of disability, they'll find a way to make sure that the American people know that this great, great President was great with his disability.

Thank you all, and God bless you. (Applause.)

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9:46 A.M. CDT

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE AGING
1996 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
APRIL 26, 1996

[Acknowledgements: Reba Schafer, Chair of the Board of NCOA; Jim Firman, new President of NCOA; Dr. Arthur Flemming, former Secretary, Department of Health, Education and Welfare; Bob Blancato (blan-CAH-toh), Executive Director of the 1995 White House Conference on Aging; Senator Ron Wyden, who will depart before your remarks]

It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to the National Council on the Aging -- an organization of community leaders who every day bring dignity, love and strength to millions of older Americans.

You serve on the front lines, whether you're working in senior centers, spreading the word about screening for osteoporosis, breast cancer and diabetes, or training seniors for jobs that allow them to give something back to their communities.

You have been a long-time friend of older Americans -- and a loyal friend of President Clinton's Administration. ~~You were the first national aging organization to endorse the Health Security Act.~~

And over the past months, you have also fought to protect Medicare, Medicaid and the Older Americans Act. And your determination and commitment to continue that fight has never been more important than right now.

Our lives, and the lives of our parents and grandparents were built on the American promise: if you work hard and play by the rules today you will have security and peace of mind tomorrow. We can't go back on that promise.

We can't go back to the days when seniors had to choose between paying their heating bills and their doctor's bills. We can't go back to the days when Americans in nursing homes went without the vital protections they need and deserve. We can't go back to the days when older Americans had to give up their independence -- because they didn't have the resources or support they needed to stay in their own communities. And, we can't go back to the days when a lifetime of hard work and sacrifice was rewarded with loneliness, inadequate health care and poverty.

The debate that is going on in Washington right now is about the heart and soul of our country. Will we move forward or backward? The President believes we must move forward.

- That's why he fought to make Social Security a strong, independent agency -- empowered to bring us into the 21st century.
- That's why, earlier this month, the President proposed legislation to help hard-working Americans by ensuring that their retirement savings stay with them when they change jobs and are there for them when they retire.
- That's why, during the Government shutdown, he told Congress to stop playing politics with senior nutrition programs.
- That's why he is fighting to reauthorize the Older Americans Act -- a vital lifeline that keeps seniors independent in their own communities.
- That's why he appointed the first Assistant Secretary for Aging -- Fernando Torres-Gil, who spoke with you yesterday.
- And that's why we must reform our health care programs the right way -- by strengthening them and controlling costs -- without turning our backs on the citizens who depend upon them.

Medicare

In the 30 years since President Johnson signed Medicare into law, the program has helped lift senior citizens out of poverty, provided them with high-quality health care and all generations with long-term peace of mind. The President has worked hard to preserve, protect, and defend Medicare -- for this generation of seniors and for every generation to come.

In his 1993 budget, the President proposed savings in Medicare that added two full years of financial solvency to the Medicare trust fund, extending the solvency period into the 21st century. [This was accomplished without a single Republican vote.]

His Administration has cracked down on health care fraud and abuse -- saving more than \$15 billion for American taxpayers in three years alone. And the Administration is aggressively expanding the choice of health plans available to Medicare recipients. Enrollment in these plans has increased by 30% with an average of 70,000 seniors enrolling in them each month.

In 1991, Medicare started covering the cost of mammograms every two years for women 65 and older -- yet only 37% of Medicare recipients take advantage of this benefit.

This is a depressing fact, given the epidemic of breast cancer now afflicting American women and their families. Last

May, we launched an awareness campaign aimed at women 65 and older -- to give them the information they need to protect their health -- and maybe even their lives. I hope that this Mother's Day we will remind our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts and daughters not to overlook this important health care opportunity.

As we protect Medicare, we also need to make the system more efficient. To make Medicare customer-friendly, this administration has cut the red tape, upgraded the data system, and said good-bye to the days when Medicare recipients had to wade through dozens of forms and mailings.

As the President works to balance the budget in seven years, he is making one thing very clear: There's a right way and a wrong way to reform Medicare.

His plan is the right way. It makes sound, rational and reasonable reductions in the rate of Medicare growth -- and extends the solvency of the Trust Fund for about a decade. It does not increase the rate of growth in premiums for senior citizens beyond 25% of costs -- and it protects low-income seniors from any premium hikes through Medicaid. It strengthens anti-fraud and abuse activities. It waives the copayment for mammography -- and provides coverage every year for women 65 and over. And, it expands seniors' choice of health care plans in a responsible manner -- without opening the door to risky plans like Medical Savings Accounts.

What the President's plan shows is this: We can balance the budget and reform Medicare -- without breaking our contract with the seniors of this country. And that's exactly what we must do.

The same is true of Medicaid.

Medicaid

In its 30-year history, Medicaid has vastly improved the health of millions of Americans. Today, 37 million women, children, senior citizens, and people living with disabilities get their health coverage from Medicaid. Medicaid is the number one payer of nursing home care in this country.

The President is committed to preserving Medicaid's federal-state partnership. Under Medicaid waivers he has granted, states get increased flexibility, and provide health coverage for 2.2 million working Americans and their children. He has approved more than 300 Medicaid waivers providing home and community-based care for senior citizens and people living with disabilities. And the President has implemented an historic bipartisan package of reforms that provide nursing home residents with a federal bill of rights and ensure that inspections focus on the quality of care being delivered.

The President has been very clear: We can't replace Medicaid's historic guarantee of health care for our neediest citizens with an underfunded block grant.

We can't make hard-working Americans choose between paying their children's college bills and their parent's nursing home bills.

We can't force seniors to give up the homes and savings they spent a lifetime building -- in order for their spouses to qualify for nursing home care under Medicaid.

Older Americans Act

The Older Americans Act is a family initiative -- in the truest sense of the word. Anyone who claims to espouse family values ought to support the Older Americans Act. It provides the glue to keep extended families together, to keep seniors safe in their own communities, and to allow them to grow old the way we all want to grow old -- with dignity.

I know that you have been fighting hard to preserve the programs in the Older Americans Act that protect the most vulnerable in our society -- those who are at risk of being abused, neglected or exploited. And, I want you to know that the President is proud to stand with you.

This Administration is fighting to reauthorize the Older Americans Act -- which has enjoyed tremendous bipartisan support for more than 30 years.

In a time of severe financial constraints, the President's 1997 budget proposal maintains or increases the current funding for Older Americans Act services -- from ombudsman to senior centers that you helped pioneer, from innovative intergenerational programs to nutrition services.

Today, older Americans are healthier, better educated and more involved than ever before. Many are beginning entirely new careers and endeavors. Participation in volunteer efforts throughout the country -- from the National Senior Service Corps to your own "Family Friends" and Foster Grandparents programs -- has increased, allowing all of us to benefit from the accumulated wisdom and experience of older Americans.

As we face the 21st century and the opportunities and challenges that will come with it, we must remember the common ground that unites us all, as Americans and as generations.

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AARP BIENNIAL CONVENTION
DENVER, COLORADO
MAY 22, 1996**

[Acknowledgments: Horace Deets, Executive Director, AARP; Margaret Dixon, Incoming President, AARP; Eugene (Gene) Lehrmann, outgoing President, AARP (introduces you)]

What a pleasure it is to speak to people who -- time and again through words and deeds -- have fought to give older Americans the health security and independence they deserve. Whether you are standing up and speaking out or giving something back to your communities, you are providing the glue to help keep our families together and strong. And, I am particularly honored to join you this month as we celebrate both Older Americans Month and Mother's Day.

I'll never forget one Mother's Day, when Chelsea was about four years old. We were at church in Little Rock. During the children's sermon, the minister summoned all the kids up to the front of the church and asked them one by one: "If you could give your mommy anything in the world today, what would it be?" When it was Chelsea's turn, she answered without hesitation, "Life insurance." I asked her later what she meant: It turned out she had heard someone talking about life insurance and thought it meant that you could live forever.

Actually, just before coming here, Governor Romer and I had the great honor of participating in a conference to talk about what's working for our children. All the experts were there. Not the pollsters and the pundits. But the real experts -- the parents, educators, religious leaders, business leaders, and health care providers -- and of course, children themselves. The caring adults who brush off the scraped knees and the bruised spirits and help give our children the tools they need to reach their God-given potential.

There are a lot of people who talk the talk of family values. But, we must do much more than just talk about family values. We must act in ways that value families. From infants to parents, and from grandparents to great-grandparents, we must preserve the family compact that links one generation to the next -- and carries us as one nation into the future.

As a young boy, my husband was raised by loving grandparents who taught him about hardwork and determination -- the keys that unlock the American Dream. Today, 3.4 million children live in a household headed by a grandparent. This is a tough time to be a child in America -- and it's even a tougher time to raise one. That's why I want to commend the AARP for creating the nation's first large-scale Grandparent Resource Center -- so that grandparents who are taking on this tremendous responsibility -- again! -- have the support they need.

Right now, there's a debate going on in Washington about the role of government. But, at its heart, it's actually about much more than that. It's about our nation's soul and character. It's about what it means to be an American. And, as we approach the 21st century, it's about what kind of country we will leave for our children and grandchildren.

There are those who think that government must do it all -- and there are others who think government should do nothing at all. As always, the truth lies somewhere in between. We know that government can't raise a family -- who ever said it could? But, we also know that families sometimes need a helping hand. We know that the greatest gifts we can give our families are the inspiration and support they need to make it on their own.

We shouldn't ever buy into the false choice between balancing the budget and protecting families -- because we can do both. But, we can only do it if we work together across the lines of politics and geography and generations in a way that protects the values and priorities of the American people.

What are our priorities? Over the last 60 years, the promises of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act have fundamentally transformed what it means to grow old in America. They are a compact between our government and our people. They are a compact between generations. And, they are built on the American promise: If you work hard and play by the rules today you will have security and peace of mind tomorrow. We can't go back on that promise.

We cannot go back to the days when older Americans had to choose between paying their heating bills and their doctors' bills. We cannot go back to the days when Americans in nursing homes went without the vital protections they need and deserve. We cannot go back to the days when Americans had to give up their independence in their senior years because they didn't have the resources they needed to stay in their own communities. And, we cannot go back to the days -- not so very long ago -- when older Americans after years of hard work and sacrifice were rewarded with loneliness, inadequate health care, and poverty.

As President Johnson said when he signed the Medicare bill 30 years ago, "No longer will this nation refuse the hand of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service and wisdom and labor to the progress of this...country."

At that time, half of all older Americans had no health insurance. Today, almost 100 percent are covered through Medicare. At that time, a full 30 percent of our nation's elderly lived in poverty. Today, that number stands at 12 percent. Today, older Americans are living longer, living healthier and living better than ever before. [By the year 2025, the number of people over the age of 85 is going to double, and the number of people 65 and older will go from 33 million to over 53 million.] Are these important accomplishments? Absolutely. But, are they enough? No, we still have a long way to go. And, the President believes we must move forward -- together.

That's why he fought to make Social Security a strong, independent agency -- empowered to bring us into the 21st century.

That's why the President proposed legislation to help hard-working Americans by ensuring that their retirement savings stay with them when they change jobs -- and are there for them when they retire.

That's why, during the Government shutdown, he told the Congress to stop playing politics with nutrition programs for seniors.

That's why he appointed the first ever Assistant Secretary for Aging at the Department of Health and Human Services.

And, that's why he's fighting to reform our health programs the right way -- by strengthening them and controlling costs -- without turning our backs on the citizens who depend upon them. For the citizen in a nursing home, for the older American covered by Medicare, and for the 55 year-old scared to leave his job because he has a pre-existing medical condition, there is no security without health security.

That's why the President has offered balanced, tough-minded, commonsense reform. He knows that Medicare has helped lift our seniors out of poverty. He knows that it has provided high-quality health care and long-term peace of mind of all Americans. And, he has made a commitment to preserve, protect, and defend Medicare -- for this generation and for every generation to come.

To help do that, his Administration has taken major steps to crack down on health care fraud and abuse. Last year, at the White House Conference on Aging, the President announced the creation of Operation Restore Trust -- an initiative that focused our efforts in five key states. In just 12 months, with the expenditure of only \$4 million, we have saved more than \$42 million for American taxpayers -- that's \$10 saved for every \$1 spent.

Operation Restore Trust works. And, now, it's time to expand it into every state in America -- so that we can stop the overbilling and double billing that undermines our health care system and robs our citizens.

The President also understands that the best thing we can do to ease the pain of illness is to prevent it -- before it occurs. Nowhere is that more clear than with flu shots and mammography -- two cases where an ounce of prevention is worth its weight in gold -- saving precious lives and precious resources.

But, it's not always enough just to provide a service like mammography. We need to ensure that people know about it -- and have access to it. In 1991, Medicare started covering the cost of mammograms every two years for women 65 and older -- yet only 37 percent of Medicare recipients take advantage of this benefit. This is tragic, given the epidemic of breast cancer now afflicting American women and their families. That's why last May, we launched an awareness campaign aimed at women 65 and older -- to give them and their health care providers the information they need to protect their health and maybe even their lives.

Because the success of our health care programs must be measured by the health and satisfaction of those who rely upon them, the Administration has worked tirelessly to make Medicare customer friendly: Cutting red tape, upgrading the data system, and waving good-bye to the days when Medicare recipients had to wade through dozens of forms and mailings.

And, as the President works to balance the budget by the year 2002, he is making it very clear that there is a right way and a wrong way to reform Medicare and Medicaid.

His plan is the right way. It makes sound, rational and reasonable reductions in the rate of

Medicare growth -- and extends the solvency of the Trust Fund for about a decade. It does not increase premiums for older Americans beyond 25 percent of costs -- and it protects low-income seniors from any premium hikes through Medicaid. It continues to strengthen anti-fraud and abuse activities. It waives the copayment for mammography -- and provides coverage every year for women 65 and older. And, it expands health care options for older Americans -- without opening the door to risky plans like Medical Savings Accounts that attract only on the healthiest and wealthiest, leaving others in more expensive traditional health plans.

Today, we rely upon the other pillar of our health care system -- Medicaid -- to provide health and hope to 37 million American women, children, older Americans, and people living with disabilities. Two-thirds of all the money we spend on Medicaid goes to the elderly and disabled. It is the number one payer of nursing home care in this country -- and we must maintain federal quality standards and enforcement to protect our nursing home residents. And Medicaid provides vital home and community-based care that allows older Americans to live their lives with dignity and independence.

The President believes that we can provide flexibility to the states without undermining Medicaid's historic guarantee of health care for our most vulnerable Americans. His Medicaid reform proposal does just that. And that's why it has earned the support of consumers and aging advocates throughout our nation.

In 1996, health care is about much more than what happens in the doctor's office or the nursing home. It's about finding ways to provide quality, affordable long-term care in our own homes. It's about unlocking the scientific mysteries behind tragedies like Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, cancer, and stroke. It's about stopping the tragedy of elder abuse and violence that plagues too many of our citizens and neighborhoods.

And, it's about re-authorizing the Older Americans Act -- so that seniors can receive the nutrition, transportation and other lifelines they need to stay independent, stay healthy, and grow old the way we all want to grow old -- with dignity. I want you to know that the President has been fighting hard to re-authorize the Older Americans Act and protect its vital services -- from the ombudsman to the Title V Older Workers Program that, with your leadership, is helping seniors begin new jobs and endeavors all across America.

We also need to keep trying to reform our health insurance system -- so that it's there for us when we need it the most. We need to pass the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill and wave goodbye to the days when insurance companies can deny you coverage because you changed jobs or lost your job or had a pre-existing condition.

But, as you know, government will never meet these or any other challenges alone. It's going to take each and every one of us. Quite frankly, it's going to take the people who built this country, and those who will inherit it, standing together as we have always done in America to create strong families and strong communities for the 21st century.

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